

Whatcom Community College
Strategic Communication Framework
May 3, 2006

The Metropolitan Group is a marketing agency for non-profits based out of Portland, Oregon. Libraries are one of their focus areas, and they have been offering the recent Marketing workshops offered through the Washington State Library. We received a grant from the WSL for a full-day workshop with the Metropolitan Group devoted to developing a marketing plan. During the workshop we recognized the following goals and outcomes:

Goals:

- Increase awareness of the unique importance of the library in the information seeking lives of the WCC's learning community (students, faculty, staff)
- Increase the visibility of the library and the library staff on campus
- Inform the learning community of the many services that the library staff provides that enhance and support the entire campus community & curriculum and thereby increase financial support for the library re: the formal WCC budget process

Outcomes:

- Increased use of the website
- Increased budget/staffing/equipment by 25%
- Increased physical space by 30%
- Increased visibility of library staff in campus life and work; increased external visibility (conferences etc)
- Stronger more diverse relationships with faculty, staff, administration & students
- Increased use of services and resources, including electronic resources, print collection, and Reference Services
- Increase enrollment in Info Lit classes by 100%
- See more faculty members and students in the library on a regular basis
- Increased enrollment in library credit courses
- Increased circulation & reference transactions (200 hundred transactions a day)
- Maintain or increase gate count (by 200 headcount per day)

The Metropolitan Group asked us to brainstorm about our "key messages" which are:

- **Overarching Message:** You can get what you need at Whatcom Community College library. We provide access to information, databases, books and journals; lead classes and customized orientations to help students make the most of the library; offer quiet space for work and study; and create opportunities for social interactions to connect better with the entire campus community.
- **What**—what is the library, what do you do?
 - Provide access to information: databases, books and journals; Customized orientations and classes; study space; opportunities for social interactions
- **So what**—how does it affect me, why should I care?
 - We are an information gateway that offers convenient access to resources and expertise to assist the campus community succeed academically and personally.
- **Now what**—deliver a call to action, what do you want the audience to do?
 - Above all, we'd like to see you in the library—stop by, find us online, or give us a call. Get what you need; we're here to help you succeed! We want faculty to ask us to assist with curriculum development, class prep, and library orientations, as well as simply sending their students in for curriculum related help. We want students to use our resources and ask us for the help they need. We want the campus community to stop in, find us online or call us and learn about what we can provide and then serve as our advocates.

Strategy

After asking very pointed questions and leading a thought-provoking discussion the Metropolitan Group identified our biggest asset: the way we interact with people—from personal contact at the circulation desk, faculty conversations with liaisons, to classes and social gatherings, the library creates a unique, memorable experience for users. They recommended we build on these wonderful relationships and perceptions we've built and use them as our "brand" and as leverage to help achieve our goals.

Key strategies and tactics are outlined below.

- A. Strategy: The overarching strategy for the Whatcom Community College Library's marketing plan is to align our brand with all points of campus interaction to create a consistent and motivating experience that will inspire increased use, loyalty, enthusiasm and support. The following strategies support and reinforce this strategy.**
 1. **Tactic:** Provide staff with opportunities to assess how our brand can be better integrated into the user experience, and identify tools to support those efforts. Includes: identifying library users in order to focus communication efforts, further define our brand with by examining language and design of library products/publications/brochures/communications, customer service training
- B. Strategy: Create opportunities for storytelling and for partnership across all communication tools and vehicles.**
 1. **Tactic:** Assess, cultivate and enhance established strong relationships with faculty, staff and students. Includes: evaluation of liaison program, attend and contribute to faculty programming (including welcoming new faculty), more partnered events for faculty and students (e.g. publishing party), more outreach to dept. chairs and faculty support, identify library champions and encourage them to advocate, attend ASB and Board meetings, incorporate storytelling and testimonials in publications, encourage word of mouth advertising.
 2. **Tactic:** Review all materials and interactions for opportunities for brand and content alignment
- C. Strategy: Align website user experience with the brand and seek to mirror the in-library experience**
 1. **Tactic:** Conduct an audit of editorial content as well as usability and navigability of the website and determine feasibility and scope of changes. Includes: develop a usability survey for web. Depending on results: increase amount of forms and options found online, post research guides, have a news or currents event page more visible, enhance the "Ask a Librarian" feature, include photos, staff profiles, quotes and testimonials.
- D. Strategy: Ensure that the physical space of and around the library brings the brand to life**
 1. **Tactic:** Signage: assess exterior signage to ensure provides direction and a sense of welcome to visitors
 2. **Tactic:** Maximize the design aesthetic. Includes: modifying furniture to increase visibility of Reference Librarian, continue to invest in flowers, candy, etc., increase visibility of books, increase familiarity of staff by including photos and names in work areas or online, find a tangible way to identify staff (t-shirts, buttons, etc.)
- E. Strategy: Use earned media to reinforce the brand and cultivate relationships with new users**
 1. **Tactic:** Continue to cultivate relationship and content inclusion with the Insider Newsletter and the Horizon student newspaper
- F. Strategy: Use measurement criteria identified in objective section of this plan to measure progress and make any necessary adjustments.**